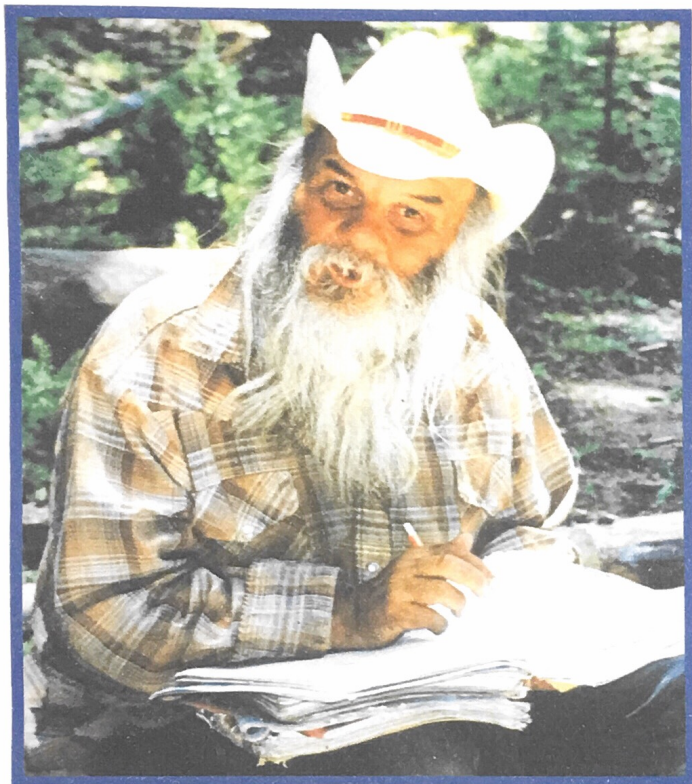




Rainbow Family

Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.
Interviews with Rainbow
Family of Living Light
folks conducted between
1977 and 2008.
Scanned in 2018.
Jodey Bateman may be
contacted on Facebook.*

03.D MONTE TIDWELL - "Diary of the 1977
New Mexico
Gathering
[3 of 3]

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[03.D]

too long. People who are hungry become impatient and walk to the breakfast circle.

The kitchen crew gave a speech before they served today. Apparently they are running short on food and due to the numbers of people arriving who are insisting on good food, their morale is low. As it was put, "We are burnt out completely and we don't know exactly what to do."

More food is expected, but there really wasn't enough to go around this morning. The crowd became very rude and unruly at times. The OM circle is still formed before every meal, but now has to be done in a series of concentric circles.

The "new" crowd of people coming in here changed the atmosphere of the gathering. There are even a few "tourist types" with cameras and bermuda shorts. There are more older people here now. There are also many people who wouldn't dare undress like most of the people previously. These are the "college kids" the "hard core" and "road" people talk about. There is a lot of nudity around.

The place right now has almost a carnival atmosphere, but the leaders are trying hard to stay on top of things. Some Sufi dancers (whirling dervishes) arrived. There are jugglers, wandering minstrels, frisbees, swimming etc. going on amidst the work which is being done by those who have been here since the beginning. I have been recognized by many as having been here a long time and often my "energy" is requested. They have been keeping me pretty busy.

The medical people have their hands full. The valley is filling up with people and there is dysentery, strep and staph going around.

There are also many cuts, bruises, burns, sunburns etc. There have been two miscarriages occur here and a woman is expecting any day. Two people have been carried out on a stretcher so far.

Grand father David is getting ready to speak at a council right

now. The council is also being termed a healing focalizing council. Barry is starting the council and asking that people get centered and pay much respect toward Grandfather David who has to speak now and then leaves soon, because he has to return to Hopi land and begin preparing there for ceremonies that he will lead. People almost automatically form circles and hold hands here. But there are so many that the people who have been here a while are much more organized than the newcomers.

Barry is going to give a history. I'm writing as he talks. 1969 - Gatherings really began in Haight Ashbury. People started changing and leaving the cities.

In 1970 there was a circle of Hipis on a commune who got together with a common energy. The people there called themselves the Rainbow Family because of the many colors and many paths that came together. In 1972 in Granby, Colorado, there was the first gathering at Strawberry Lake. Many trials and tribulations. The first city of New Jerusalem, according to Barry. The pattern was set and is trying to be held on to. But each year everyone has dispersed after the gathering.

1973 - Green River, Wyoming. 1,400 people came together. Much energy and a lot of healing. A very mellow event, said Barry.

1974 - Purgatory River, Utah. People began saying, "We are Rainbow People who want to restore the earth, bring peace to many people and restore unity."

1975 - All the gathering sites were chosen by visions or dreams. Arkansas and again many trials and tribulations. People were arrested but were gotten out of jail. "We don't leave anybody behind. It's our custom," said Barry.

1976 - Montana. Jones Creek Peace Gathering - 350 people stood on Canada-US border to have unity of one earth and one people.

1977 - Now in New Mexico. They chose this state while in

Montana. Nobody knows how the Great Spirit chose. Here we are - the first complete circle of tipis since Oregon. Somehow we've stayed together. Now we will try to find land. There is much sentiment for this.

A stone tablet was found by the Family in 1971. It was thought to be from the Hopis but they said it wasn't. But it was the first contact with the Hopis. They held a council with the Family in a Kiva about being "warriors of the new day to restore the earth." All now are watching whether we truly are warriors of the Rainbow. Hopis have been in contact with the Rainbow Family ever since. Grandfather David will now talk on the Hopi prophecy and dangers facing the Hopi people now. Also a book is being passed around for signatures to put your energy with the Hopi people and show we are united.

On the fourth day there will be a silence circle to find out who we are and whether or not we are a tribal whole. We will then seek a permanent piece of land for us to be a tribal whole if we are, said Barry.

Barry is still speaking. He wants to have more councils on how gatherings are organized so more people will understand the pattern and do them. You need a spiritual orientation, he says.

Grandfather David is coming now. Almost all the people are present to hear him. He is being led out by Pukulani and Little Falcon. There is much silence and respect.

Medicine Story is holding up a cloth with Hopi designs on it. It is a story of the prophecy written on a rock long ago. All the prophecies are coming true, said Pukulani. Grandfather David will speak on this. The book is now being passed around for signatures to keep the Hopis from being forced to move from their sacred grounds. We have to pray, says Pukulani.

Grandfather David is now standing and wants to hold the cloth with the design and story. He says:

"This was drawn on a rock long ago. A man down here is showing

where the Hopi came from below. A bow beside a man shows he is the Bow Clan leader who led the people. In order to escape the corrupt life they had to go where the Great Spirit lived.

"When the Hopis were allowed to come to the upper world, they were told that white people would come from the east and try to change their customs. They were warned not to change or the whites would take their lands. The Great Spirit said, 'Look at me. I am poor. I have only my seed corn, my digging stick, my bowl of water and these ragged clothes. If you want to live here you must live like me.'

"The prophecy says the white people will have three wars and they will want what is under the ground on Hopi land for wars.

"After they have wars and a gourd full of ashes falls on the ground—the atomic bomb—then people with long hair will come to help. Everybody that has been pushed around will unite together to cut the roots of the White House so they can have a good life. The Hopi need help to keep the land."

After his talk Pukulani told how we could help—petitions, prayers, letters.

Then everyone circled around Grandfather David and sang, "Listen to my heart song. I will never forget you. I will never forsake you." This lasted about 15 minutes. I just signed the petition. I was number 661.

Michael John then spoke of the caravans he proposes to have in the future. These will go to the public places, city parks etc. They will be as healers of the nation to raise the consciousness of everyone. The Family needs a better communication and transportation network, he says.

He announced another healing council at Meditation Meadow tomorrow. He also said a list of the workshops would be put on the bulletin board at the information center (also

called the Rumor Control Center)

After the council, some of the Sufi dancers led some people in some dancing and chanting inside the sacred circle. Some chants were in Sanskrit and some in English. Everyone seemed to enjoy these immensely.

Later in the day a person had to be physically restrained. He is obviously mentally ill. He ran the Christ Family people out of their

cave and was also throwing rocks at people. He hit a woman before anyone could stop him. We carried him to Garrick's tent where he calmed down. He was given a massage, music was played to him and he drank some herbal tea with a relaxant in it. Later on, people formed a circle around the tent and began the "OM" chant. This seems to be the Family's cure-all.

The masses have arrived. One of the organizers estimated close to 2,000 people are here. It's becoming louder and more crowded.

There are activities happening everywhere.

Sat. July 2 - This morning there was a ceremonial prayer smoke at the fire circle with Grandfather David before he leaves. The symbolism behind the pipe was explained in great detail by a white man called Light Feather. Grandfather David blessed a staff owned by one of the Family members and told him to treat it like a son and it will hold power.

There are some bluegrass musicians gathered to one side of the tipi circle now and they are drawing quite a crowd with their lively music. There are more cameras here now. The first week I only saw one. There are sketch artists all over the place. The workshop bulletin board is becoming very full. Much activity going on. There are now 21 tipis. The circle is full, but many are going up outside the circle.

This morning an airplane circled the camp. It dropped a note right in the middle of us which said "We love you all. We're taking photographs. May the Rainbow Family live on. Your brother Jeff."

The morning council is beginning. The councils are repetitions to me because I've been here a while. They are mainly aimed at newcomers.

I attended the workshop on living in the 21st Century held by 21st Century Fox. He actually is an unofficial delegate from the UN on vacation. He worked with Buckminster Fuller for a long time and became interested in establishing alternative communities like the peace villages proposed by the Rainbow Family. There were many people who participated and many ideas were tossed around. They brought out the point that the industrial complex is based on the assumption of constant growth and that this leads to over-exploitation. The new communities should balance resources and people, it was said. An optimum size of 500 was suggested which was taken from an anthropological survey of tribal people. Someone said one of the tenets should be a low material need individually. Other things were discussed, such as energy sources, the level of technology, how to deal with violence, education etc. It was very interesting to see how many primitive models were used as examples.

The person who flipped out yesterday is still causing a problem because he is not improving and the Family leaders don't know exactly how to deal with him. They don't want to kick him out of the gathering because this is a healing gathering and they feel he can be helped here. They know if they kick him out he'll go to a mental hospital and they don't want that. They are having a council now concerning the problem and I just noticed, that they carried him out of the tipi to the middle of the council circle. They feel that with so much "healing energy" and love here that he can be healed. At least they will try.

Perhaps 100 people have huddled around him in a tight bunch doing the OM chant in a loud voice. It seems like an exorcism "Come out" and "Let go" etc. Now everyone is raising their hands

high over him and the pitch of the OM chant raised. There was a small cheer before this happened but I don't know why. I can't see inside the people. More people are joining the circle and the OM is getting very loud. The person in the middle is screaming "let me go" or just screaming at times.

The OM circle has quieted down and Barry announced that the person would be escorted to Security camp and be watched over there. Their "medicine" apparently didn't work but seemed to make him worse off.

The best fiddler I've ever heard just played in the circle. He sure got everybody worked up.

Medicine Story is now giving a lecture on Indian prophecies and tradition. He says "There was a time when everything existed in the spirit. It was desired, maybe playfully, to manifest in physical form. The dark world was like a sea in which there were spirits and it was black.

"The light world was like the sky, turquoise. A tree was in that world that lit up the spirit world. There were spirit villages. Kitan decided it was time to manifest physically. He sent a dream to a female spirit to conceive this world. She went to the tree. She had a dream to lift the tree. There was a hole into which she fell. She grabbed some herbs before she fell. It took ten days until she arrived in the dark world. They saw her coming and let her down softly on the back of a sea turtle. She had her baby born of the West Wind. There were twins who argued in the womb. One was an evil spirit who wanted to come out first but didn't. The evil one burst the mother's side and she died. There has been a battle ever since. The evil one manifested many things the Creator didn't really want. Every time something good was manifested the evil one manifested something evil.

"Prophecies were given to the good twin through dreams. They came in the form of a rainbow. He knew he was on

the right path. There were four messages that would be to straighten the world. Everyone was to live in harmony. That was the Creator's instructions each time. The good twin created people from the earth, but he kept struggling with the bad twin. The bad one gave four poisons - sickness, falsehood, bad feelings (fear, hate), arrogance (poison of the spirit).

"There was a big fight, a huge earth struggle. The good twin finally won. He took his poisons and threw them in a cave. He told the people when struck by these poisons to throw rocks in a cave with mystical water to get rid of poisons of body, mind, heart, spirit. The good twin went across the ocean. He will return to battle off current evil.

"Another messenger was a little boy who was missing from camp for a long time. He came in looking together. He had gone to have a vision quest. A bird gave him power to heal. He taught ceremonies and herbs. He taught the sweat lodge and mantras for endurance, honesty, generosity and humility/respect. His mother died and he walked across the bay into Wild Turkey country. Then came Hiawatha and Handsome Lake, the third and fourth messengers."

Then Medicine Story related it all to today. He said we need to get back to the original teachings. Awareness, simplification, co-operation, self-sufficiency, self-determination are the five things needed to develop, he says. It fits in with the values of the Rainbow Family.

A lady named Wind Dance got up shortly afterward and said she strongly objected to pictures being taken. This caused some objection and got some support, but the argument died down quickly.

Sunday July 3 - This morning's council was very different than the other previous ones. The usual leaders just sat back and let it happen. There are many special interest groups at the

gathering now, each with a special but usually pertinent cause to promote. The first person to stand and speak was a representative of the League of Volunteer Environmentalists. He spoke for quite some time on the many environmental problems facing the world and handed out pamphlets on how everyone can help. Next a Hopi spokesman of Friends of the Hopi handed out copies of the Hopi newspaper printed in English and Spanish. Some poetry was read.

During this time, Pip, a Family member from Tulsa, Oklahoma, was walking around the council circle waving an eagle feather to purify the area. He was also holding a blanket in which was wrapped the stone tablet that the Family had found and thought was the missing Hopi tablet. The stone gave them first contact with the Hopis but proved not to be the missing tablet. The stone is said to be very "high" and is kept carefully guarded by various Family members. Many of the Family have meditated with the stone and reported having visions and voices come from the stone. I plan to find out more about the significance of the stone to the Family as I do not fully understand it.

Pip kept repeating that it was just a stone with an inscription, not an idol or a god.

There are, I've been told, approximately 3000 people here. There are many older people, some going nude and really enjoying themselves. There are many more blacks here now, male and female. The number of Spanish speakers is large. The number of Indians is also especially large. But still the vast majority is young whites. There are people here from every continent and many countries too numerous to mention.

Also at the council there was some organizing initiated along regional lines. A person from the West Coast stood and announced a meeting of persons of that area to discuss better communications. He talked about organizing regional gatherings, co-ops, environmental

groups etc. Then a person from the Northeast stood and announced a meeting of people from that area.

There are now five kitchens serving the people: Carnival Kitchen (the largest) Fall Springs kitchen (for baking and sprouts) the Feather kitchen (a smaller version of Carnival Kitchen, the Krishna kitchen (which serves about 200 people) and the Coffee and Tea kitchen which just sprang up.

The meals are very organized, considering the number of people to be fed. The OM circles still happen religiously in concentric circles around the food servers. It was requested that silence be maintained after the OM and people are respecting this.

Yesterday the 7,000 pounds of produce from Mexico arrived which included potatoes, onions, cucumbers, squash, bananas, watermelons, cantaloupes and pineapples. This, along with the food brought in by individuals, will probably serve all who are here adequately. There are, as always, two meals a day.

Other things which have been scarce previously are appearing because of all the people bringing them in. There are more drugs, tobacco, coffee, salt and even some beer. And more money.

Michael John made the request at meal time that we begin observing the silence that will last until after tomorrow. He asked that all our conversations be limited to workshops and essential information. This, of course, is almost impossible since so many people have come here to have a good time and party, but it will probably be observed by many who are sincere about the spiritual atmosphere that is desired.

The stone is called by the Family The Stone of Many Faces. It was found in 1971, I was told by Light Feather, by some brothers and sisters in Oregon who were following the end of a rainbow. When they arrived at the place close to where the rainbow ended, they found the stone sitting on a stump. The inscriptions on the stone (sandstone) are very hard to make out.

Grandfather David is leaving now on the back of a horse. Many people are following him and saying "Thank you" or "We love you."

Again there is much activity. Too much to capture or keep up with.

Monday July 4 Independence Day. At last night's council it was let known that there is only enough food left for two more meals. Garrick said there were about 4,000 of us here and asked all who were willing and able to fast. He said three trucks were going out right now to different places and he asked for donations. I believe quite a bit was collected. He also asked if anyone had a flat bed truck they could volunteer, and he got one. The first truck won't return until tomorrow.

Barry also announced that the 4th was the day to observe silence. There would be a gathering on the highest mesa at noon and it would all be in complete silence. A conch shell will blow today to signal the beginning of the silence.

Last night the astrologers at the gathering got together and charted their celestial influences on the gathering. After council they presented their findings in play form by acting it out.

Today has already started out pretty quiet. The ceremonial prayer smoke that occurs daily is going on now. A few people are meditating. Many are walking around waking up. There is some soft music from guitars and flutes. Some people are playing frisbee. One person is beating a drum and chanting out in the meadow. There will be no breakfast today, but probably they will serve tea. There will be a council and then silence.

There is a notable increase in dogs and children I haven't mentioned yet. The children are treated as if they were in an extended family network at times. They are cared for by many adults other than their mothers. I also believe that calling people "brother" or "sister" may be an attempt to recapture some of the functions of an extended family.

This morning's council was long and disorganized. Many people had things to say. There were some of the usual announcements, notices

of stolen or misplaced things, some talk concerning the spiritual nature of the gathering, some activity announcements etc. Finally Michael John said it was nearing the time to be silent so that we could pray and listen to God. We formed a circle (those of us at the council) made up of about 4,000 people. Michael John began leading us holding hands, in a single file towards the mesa. We walked past people who watched and talked, but those of us in the line maintained the silence for the most part. We ascended the mesa on a trail, holding hands the entire way. When we finally reached the top, we formed a circle and sat down in silence. To the east of the circle was an American flag tied to a cedar pole. We sat in silence for approximately an hour. Some sat in the lotus position, some were in a prayer position, some were doing yoga asanas, others were just sprawled comfortably but meditatively. Many others came from below and stood outside the circle. After we had sat there for the hour or so, Michael John arose and began leading a spiral that gradually got smaller and closer together until we were all assembled as tightly as possible with our arms around each other. Then the OM began and lasted for quite some time. When it died down, Michael John said, "For $3\frac{1}{2}$ days we have been looking inward. Now is the turning point. For the next $3\frac{1}{2}$ days we will look outward. Those who are serious need to start thinking of ourselves as a tribe and we need to begin thinking of the healers' caravan."

Then someone began singing and the rest of us joined in:

"Oh, Great Spirit, sun, sky and sea.

You are inside and all around me."

This also lasted for quite some time.

We then clasped hands and held them above our heads. All This happened spontaneously. One person would do something and everyone else would go along. Then it was suggested that

we all face one direction and rub the person's back in front of us. The OM chant started again and lasted for a long time until it died down. Someone then cried "Hallelujah" and everyone else began yelling and saying "Praise God" and things like that. We then began dispersing in a fairly silent manner. The period of silence is over, but the food fast continues for many.

There are some professional people here now. A few doctors, university professors, chiropractors, reporters, photographers etc. One thing this does for the Family's benefit is that it increases the funds raised through panhandling. These people have money to contribute and are apparently doing so, because the amount of money being raised is increasing.

The new sweets, built three days ago, are made of adobe. They are very popular here. The lines of people waiting for sweets are usually very long.

There are many people coming, but also quite a few leaving now. I've noticed that many of the people who have been working on the preparation for the gathering are leaving. I talked to some of them and most say they will come back for cleanup. There seems to be a hard core of Family members that prefer the intimacy and smallness of before and after the gathering over the activity and hugeness of the gathering.

Tuesday July 5 Last night after an unusually hard rain about sunset, a very distinct double rainbow appeared over the gathering site. The people here went into the wildest, most intense celebration I've seen yet. Many people appeared awe-stricken and I have to admit it was a beautiful sight. Garrick told me, "It's a sign, it's a vision and it's not hard to interpret." Many people were saying it was a sign of God's approval of the Rainbow Family. Many people reported seeing a rainbow around the sun before it went down.

The music and cheering lasted into the night. Dinner was postponed and served in the dark because of it. More shipments

of food and it seems that the food crisis is over. It appears that the number of people has diminished here a little although the crowd is still large.

There was a baby born in one of the tipis this morning, ^{of} so silence pervades much of the area. There is a circle of people holding hands in silence around the tipi.

Because of the birth, the council was moved to the eating area. Michael John talked about the caravan he proposes. He explained that he already has the commitment of 10 to 15 healers to begin a healing caravan across the country. He asked that dance groups, musicians, artists or other groups interested in separate caravans meet with him. He asked that all those without attachments and who are interested in spreading the Family's love to other places get together with him to discuss resources, types of transportation (preferably school buses) and other ideas. He proposed that a number of separate caravans sweep the country from east to west and back again. He wants them to travel closely together on zig-zag routes so that each caravan will hit the same town three times during the week and that all the caravans come together on weekends. He said that it's not illegal to come together in small groups, which the caravans will be doing.

There have been attempts at caravans in the past but they always dispersed before going too far. But I've been told, they get a little more organized every year.

There was a lot of talk of tribal unity at the council. It was mentioned that every year the Rainbow Family disperses and scatters but that it is very necessary to stay together and maintain strong contact. People were encouraged to trade addresses and "keep the spirit flowing." There is a book available at the information booth for everyone, including groups co-ops, communes to put their addresses. Many people are doing this.

Many of those who spoke talked about things like "We are

spirit, not bodies" or "We are love" etc. Enthusiastic crowd reaction.

Today there is much trading going on. People have their wares spread on blankets on the ground. There is also trading going on between individuals who don't have a large number of stock items to trade. I traded someone my knife for an ink pen which I have been needing for a few days now. Money is absolutely not used in these exchanges. Some of the people who are involved in co-operatives spoke at the council. They desire to set up a nationwide alternative to the existing market system. They want co-operatives from different regions involved in straight bartering, thus excluding middlemen and the profit incentive. The things being exchanged here today are primarily arts and crafts such as musical instruments, jewelry or tools, but the co-op people are interested mainly in food exchange, it seems.

I've made a list of the 28 workshops going on today, but these vary daily. There are many religious groups, occult groups and meditation groups holding workshops. There are many concerning art, music and poetry. I can testify that there are some fantastic massage workshops. Some workshops deal with more or less practical topics like innovative child rearing, how to obtain land, herbology, gardening, self-sufficiency skills etc.

I was told that when the large crowds of people leave, the "hard core" Family members will go to work again to clean up the area. Every last scrap of garbage, I'm told, is hauled out and placed on trucks which carry it all to recycling centers. The campsites, fire places and shitters are covered over with dirt and the whole area of the gathering is re-seeded by the Family with grasses and plants native to the area. As much as possible, the area is made to look as if the gathering didn't happen.

[Monte made a few mistakes of fact in his diary. The Christ Family do not wear three keys around their necks. The "keys" are

simply the principles of no killing, no sex and no materialism. Foxfire was not "at least in his fifties" when Monte met him but 44. Medicine Story is not an MD, but he has worked in the mental health field in California.

In spite of a few errors like this, Monte gives a very accurate all-round picture of the impression a gathering makes. For other views of two of the events he describes, the entry for Tuesday, June 28, about putting out the forest fire is also told about by Jay Sun and Foxfire in their life stories in the parts dealing with the New Mexico Gathering; the psychotic man who had to be restrained on June 28th and 29th is also told about in the life stories of Barry, Crazy John and Banjo Jennie.

Since the New Mexico Gathering Monte has traveled widely in Mexico and Central America and has taught school in Belize, a country many Rainbow people visit. Now Monte is in Houston working for Pueblo to People, an organization that sells Central American peasant handicrafts and agricultural products in this country and returns all the money to the peasant producers and craftspeople except for transportation expenses. Pueblo to People also gives help to Central American refugees in this country and Mexico and works with the movement against US intervention in Central America.

Many Rainbow people like the Nicaraguan coffee that Monte and the other Pueblo to People folks distribute through food co-ops around the country.